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SUBJECT: SECURITY CONCERNS DOMINATE DURING UNAMI/MNF-I
QUARTERLY BRIEF TO SECURITY COUNCIL

11. (U) Summary: On December 11, UN SRSG for Iraq Ashraf Qazi and Ambassador Sanders on behalf of MNF-I presented their quarterly briefings during a public meeting of the Security Council regarding the situation in Iraq. In his remarks, Qazi issued a stark warning, saying that the recent quarterly report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) assessed that "Iraq stands on the brink of civil war and chaos." He helpfully emphasized the need for "active cooperation" from states in the region as well as the international community. Both, he argued, have a "real stake" in Iraq's success. Qazi concluded: "Failure in Iraq is not an option." He also confirmed that the deteriorating security situation had led UNAMI to temporarily reduce its staffing presence in Baghdad.

12. (U) Summary continued: Interventions by Council members were largely in the same pessimistic vein, although most expressed clear support for the International Compact and UNAMI's role. Many countries also stated explicit support for the MNF-I's continued presence. Major exceptions were France and China, who called for a timeline for MNF-I's withdrawal. Russia did not mention MNF-I in its statement. Iraqi PermRep Hamid Bayati also spoke and urged UNAMI to play an increased role. A report of briefings by Qazi and Ambassador Sanders is at paras 3-5, Council reaction is at paras 6-9, and final comments by Bayati and Qazi are at paras 10-11. End summary.

BRIEFINGS BY SRSG QAZI AND AMBASSADOR SANDERS

13. (U) SRSG Qazi briefed the Council December 11 on UNAMI's quarterly report. Saying that "Iraq stands on the brink of civil war and chaos," Qazi stated that "efforts made by the Government of Iraq and the Multinational Force have not prevented a continuous deterioration of the security situation which, if not reversed, will progressively undermine Iraq's political prospects." He listed a number of initiatives, including meetings sponsored by the Ministry of National Dialogue and the Baghdad Security Plan, and concluded that they had been ineffective in controlling violence. In order to reduce the violence, Qazi said that "a collective international and regional initiative...is the only way forward." He therefore supported the SYG's call for a regional contact group - "a broader and more inclusive

political approach that involves all the main neighbours of Iraq, as well as the P5 countries." He also stated that regional states and the international community should provide "active cooperation" to Iraq because they have a "real stake" in Iraq's success, and asserted that "Failure in Iraq is not an option."

¶4. (U) Qazi listed a number of issues for which he believed Iraqi consensus is needed. Among them was "finding a mutually acceptable way to discuss the future of the MNF-I,s role as a key component of a national reconciliation process." He concluded his presentation by vowing that UNAMI would continue to remain "actively engaged with national, regional and international actors to help Iraq arrest the further deterioration of an already critical situation."

¶5. (U) Ambassador Sanders followed Qazi,s statement with a briefing on behalf of MNF-I. She noted progress made by the Iraqi government on its reform agenda, as well as progress made on the International Compact with Iraq. She also noted that the security situation causes "grave concern," and that sectarian violence had increased. Ambassador Sanders underscored the importance of national reconciliation, MNF-I support for the Iraqi government as it prepares to assume full responsibility for the country,s security, and MNF-I support for a robust UNAMI presence.

SC MEMBERS RESPOND

¶6. (U) SECURITY SITUATION DIRE: All Security Council members began by commenting on and agreeing with the stark warnings

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issued by Qazi during his presentation and as outlined in greater detail in the latest UNAMI report. First to speak was the French PermRep, who said France was "deeply concerned" by the increasing violence and the "vast suffering endured by the Iraqi people." He called for relaunching the Iraqi political process, restoring Iraqi sovereignty through a clear withdrawal process for MNF-I, and the support of the international community and the region, points echoed by the Chinese PermRep. Russia, Argentina and Greece commented that the current situation is not working, and that both the international community and the Government of Iraq need to reexamine their positions. They and other countries, including France and China, expressed support for the SYG,s call for a regional conference. The UK PermRep said the security situation was serious, and that addressing it is the top priority of the Government of Iraq and the MNF-I, comments echoed by Slovakia and Denmark, fellow Council members and MNF-I contributors.

¶7. (U) MNF-I SUPPORT: The majority of Council members expressly supported the work of MNF-I, although there were notable exceptions. France and China said only that MNF-I should clearly present a timeline for leaving Iraq, while the Russian PermRep did not mention MNF-I at all in his statement.

¶8. (U) SUPPORT FOR THE COMPACT: Most Council members stated strong support for the work of the International Compact for Iraq. China, among other members, said it "fully supported" the Compact and encouraged the international community to support the initiative. Only France and Russia did not mention the Compact in their statements.

¶9. (U) SUPPORT FOR UNAMI: All Council members warmly thanked Qazi and UNAMI for their efforts, and said the UN,s efforts were needed in actively supporting the Compact and national reconciliation. Several members, including Russia, France and Qatar, said action was needed to address the growing refugee problem, and UNAMI,s efforts in this would be welcome.

¶10. (U) Iraqi PermRep Bayati took the floor following the SC statements, and began by stressing that a larger UN presence is required in Iraq. He acknowledged the "dangerous slide to the brink of civil war," and attributed this slide to "Saddam loyalists, extremists (note: he used the Arabic word "taqfireen" which implies Sunni extremists) and criminal groups." He agreed with statements by Council members on the necessity to enlarge the political and national reconciliation process, and added that the full transfer of security responsibility from MNF-I to the Iraqi Security Forces will occur as soon as possible. Bayati ended with a plea not to view the human rights situation in Iraq independently of the worsening security context. He stressed that human rights violations that occur between security forces and "terrorists and criminal groups" cannot be compared to the human rights violations that these groups precipitate upon Iraqi civilians. He concluded that an improvement in the security situation would result in an improvement in the human rights situation.

¶11. (U) Asked for his final thoughts before the session was gaveled to a close, Qazi emphasized the "debilitating human cost of the violence" in Iraq, which he termed "among the worst in the world." He noted that "a lot is expected of UNAMI" and said UNAMI was ready to help. Nevertheless, he said that UNAMI had decided to temporarily reduce its personnel in Baghdad because of security concerns, although he committed to increasing this number as soon as conditions improved. Assistance to Iraq, he stated, is "a moral and strategic imperative that none of us can afford to ignore."
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